

a lot of time on a horse. So I know what the life of a farmer and a rancher is all about. But this legislation on the farm bill, Mr. President, is much more to America than just about these farmers and ranchers. Yes, it is important to stand up for them and for them to have champions here on the floor of the Senate, both on the Democratic side as well as on the Republican side. That is why it should not be even close as an issue in terms of us getting to a 60-vote margin tomorrow. It ought to be done easily because we ought to be champions for these people.

But it is more than about the farmers and ranchers in America. It is about a lot of other things. It is about making sure we embrace the clean energy economy of the 21st century. Nowhere in America is there more excitement and enthusiasm than there is in rural America today about how rural America will help us pioneer our way to energy independence the same as with Brazil, a Third World country, through a 20-year dedication to the cause of energy independence, to become energy independent. There is no reason why we in America cannot do the same thing if we put our minds to it and we have the courage to put the right policies in place. And rural America will play a very significant role in creating that energy independence.

This legislation we have brought to the floor of the Senate from both committees, the Finance Committee as well as from the Agriculture Committee, makes a very significant step in the right direction of getting us off the addiction of foreign oil and opening a new opportunity for energy security for America. When I look at the issue of energy, yes, we will be debating and be having votes on the issue of Iraq tomorrow, but part of why we are involved in these issues in the Middle East is because of the fact that oil has been a driver in our foreign policy. We ought not to let that ever happen again in America. We ought not to let oil be a driver in our foreign policy.

So as we embrace this ethic of a clean energy economy for the 21st century, that is part of what is at the heart of the farm bill in title IX. As we look at dealing with the environmental security of our globe, of this planet, that also is at the heart of this legislation. When we look at creating a new economic opportunity, a new tomorrow for rural America, that is also in this legislation.

But it goes beyond energy. It also deals with nutrition. We need to keep reminding the people who are critical of this farm bill that they are wrong because they are aiming at the wrong parts. They aim at the 14 percent of the bill that creates the support, the safety net for farmers and ranchers who are out there in the fields, but we have to recognize that it is almost 67 percent of the money that is set forth in this bill that goes into all the nutrition programs. Those nutrition programs help our children make sure they have the

food in their stomachs to be able to learn while they are in school. Those nutrition programs are the ones that help the most vulnerable here in America.

It goes beyond nutrition. It also deals with the issue of conservation and how we take care of our land and water. This bill is a very important step and makes a very important statement in making sure we help take care of the crown jewels of America with the best stewards of our land and water.

So if you are a champion of the farmers and ranchers of this country, you are going to vote yes on cloture on this bill tomorrow. If you are a champion for the new clean energy economy, you are going to vote yes on this cloture motion tomorrow. If you are a champion of taking care of those who are most in need, the most vulnerable in America in our nutrition programs, you are going to vote yes on this cloture motion tomorrow. If you are a champion and a fighter in protecting our land and water, then you will vote yes on this cloture motion tomorrow. Because it is only by getting to yes on this cloture motion tomorrow, with 60 votes, that we can then create the orderly process that can have us consider amendments that will improve this farm bill and get it across the finish line and then moving forward with the rest of the process to get it to the President's desk for signature.

Mr. President, tonight, I urge my colleagues to think about their vote tomorrow, and I ask them to vote yes on this very important motion that will come before us.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. SALAZAR. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that there now be a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

PASSAGE OF HEAD START CONFERENCE REPORT

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I am pleased to speak today about the conference report for the Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007.

I appreciate the efforts of Chairman KENNEDY, as well as Senators ENZI, DODD and ALEXANDER, for working together to lead this effort.

This bipartisan legislation reauthorizes the Head Start program, something the Congress has not done since 1998.

In 1965, President Johnson launched a summer program for low-income children and their families called Project Head Start.

The program's mission was simple: to prepare low-income, preschool-aged children for success in school.

Today, Head Start serves children and their families in urban and rural areas across the United States.

Since its inception, more than 20 million children and families have benefited from the Head Start program.

Nevada's eight centers range from a Head Start and Early Head Start Center in rural Ely, to larger, more urban centers in Reno and Las Vegas, to a Tribal Head Start center in Gardnerville.

Each of these programs is unique, because they focus on the needs of children and their families in the communities they serve.

Today, more than 40 years since its inception, Head Start provides comprehensive early education and health services to almost 1 million low-income preschool children to help them prepare for and succeed in school.

Unfortunately, this is only a fraction of the number of children that could benefit from Head Start services.

In Nevada alone, nearly 10,000 3- and 4-year-olds are eligible for Head Start programs. But, last year, only about one quarter of those eligible were able to participate.

This legislation will expand access and eligibility for low-income children and families, which will open the doors to Head Start to tens of thousands of children in Nevada and across America.

The bill also makes a number of other important changes to the Head Start program.

It gives children the tools they need to start school by aligning Head Start standards and services with State and local school standards and requiring new research-based standards and assessments.

And, to ensure that Head Start programs are serving children as effectively as possible, the bill requires greater accountability through improved governance and recompetition for poor performing Head Start centers.

Finally, the bill strengthens the Head Start workforce by setting new education and training goals for Head Start teachers and curriculum specialists.

With proven and lasting results, Head Start is a wise investment in our future.

I urge all of my colleagues to join me in supporting this important legislation.

(At the request of Mr. REID, the following statement was ordered to be printed in the RECORD.)

• Mr. DODD. Mr. President, I rise to celebrate the passage of the Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act to reauthorize the Head Start program yesterday. This legislation is a great accomplishment for the Congress and improves opportunities for nearly a million young children and their families. Head Start represents our understanding that our children must be a top priority. While as children represent one quarter of our population, they represent 100 percent of our future.

I would like to thank Senators KENNEDY, ENZI and ALEXANDER for their

leadership on this bill and their strong bipartisan work to complete this conference report. I also commend Chairman MILLER and Ranking Member McKEON in the House of Representatives and Congressmen KILDEE and CASTLE for their work on this reauthorization. Since 2003, the Senate HELP Committee and the House Education and Labor Committee have worked to reauthorize this legislation. As a result of more than four years of bipartisan efforts, the conference report we adopted yesterday improves and strengthens the already successful Head Start program. I am happy with the unanimous passage of the bill and look forward to its enactment into law.

Since 1965, Head Start has provided comprehensive early childhood development services to low-income children. The evidence is clear: Head Start works for the more than 900,000 children enrolled in its centers throughout the country.

This conference report bolsters the comprehensive nature of Head Start that aids in the social, emotional, physical and cognitive development of low-income preschool children. The program is successful because each center works to address the needs of its local community. Head Start is more than just a school readiness program; it addresses the comprehensive needs of children and their families by providing health and other services to enrolled children.

The role of parents as essential partners and decisionmakers in Head Start is also strengthened in this legislation. Families play the most important role in ensuring the success of their children, and our bill maintains an integral role for parents in the decision-making and day-to-day operations of the program. Parent involvement is a centerpiece of Head Start and I believe this bill strengthens their critical role.

Expanded eligibility, improved accountability, strengthened school readiness for children and enhanced teacher quality are some of the essential elements of this legislation. In addition, collaboration and coordination with other early childhood development programs and outreach to underserved populations is greatly improved. The legislation before us significantly increases resources for Indian Head Start and Migrant and Seasonal Head Start. In addition, Early Head Start is prioritized, so that thousands of additional infants and toddlers will be served. We know that major brain development occurs in the first 3 years of life and I am thrilled that we are putting research into practice by expanding Early Head Start.

The conference report will enable more low-income children to get a head start by allowing programs to serve families with incomes up to 130 percent of the poverty level, while ensuring that the most vulnerable families below the poverty level are served first. This is important for Connecticut and other States where the cost of living is

especially high and many working poor families aren't able to access services because they earn just above the poverty level.

Although we do not go as far as I would personally like to see in funding for Head Start, we do authorize additional resources in this bill. Despite the tight budget situation, we authorize an increase of six percent from \$6.9 billion to \$7.35 billion in fiscal year 2008, to \$7.65 billion in fiscal year 2009 and to \$7.995 billion in fiscal year 2009. I continue to be gravely concerned about the lack of resources for Head Start—funding levels have been essentially flat since 2002. Currently, only half of eligible children are served in Head Start and fewer than 5 percent are served in Early Head Start. The increased funding authorized by this bill will help us to begin to close this gap.

Across the country, Head Start providers are reporting rising costs in transportation health care premiums, facilities maintenance and training for staff. Rising operating costs are coinciding with decreasing state, local and private contributions to Head Start programs. We address these needs by ensuring that all Head Start programs receive a cost of living increase, tied to inflation, each year that funds are available.

Research shows that child outcomes are directly related to the quality of the teachers and professionals who work with them on a daily basis. I am pleased that in the bill we establish strong educational standards for Head Start teachers, curriculum specialists and teacher assistants. In 6 years, all Head Start teachers will be required to have an associate's degree and 50 percent of teachers will be required to have a bachelor's degree. I will continue to work toward increased funding to assist teachers in pursuing additional educational goals.

When Head Start began more than 40 years ago, it was the only preschool program available for low-income children; now there are many approaches. Collaboration and coordination with other early childhood programs is also an essential piece of this Head Start bill, reducing duplication and encouraging opportunities for shared information and resources.

This legislation represents an important step forward and I welcome our continued focus on the needs of our Nation's children.●

SITING FUTUREGEN IN ILLINOIS

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, we are nearing an important milestone in the development of an ambitious project to develop new, environmentally friendly ways of using coal. FutureGen is a joint venture between the Department of Energy and an international, non-profit consortium of coal producers and energy generators. The FutureGen project will explore the viability of capturing and sequestering carbon dioxide an unwanted by-product of coal use.

The plan is to begin facility construction for the project in 2010, with full-scale operation beginning in 2013. The plant will generate approximately 275 megawatts of electricity, which is enough to supply 150,000 homes.

The key to the FutureGen project, of course, is siting it at a location that can best meet the project's goals for carbon capture and sequestration. Right now four sites are under consideration, including Mattoon and Tuscola, IL. Those sites are ideally suited for this project. Illinois is coal country. Our State has 38 billion tons of recoverable bituminous coal reserves, the largest in the Nation. That's one-eighth of the total U.S. coal reserves, representing more energy than the oil reserves of Saudi Arabia and Kuwait combined.

The Illinois sites have an abundant and reliable supply of water. The deep, thick, undisturbed sandstone reservoirs of southern Illinois are well suited for carbon sequestration. Unlike the other sites being considered for FutureGen, Illinois shares geological features with other states likely to build new coal plants capable of carbon capture and sequestration. The experience gained, then, by siting this project in Illinois will be key to extending the technology to new coal-fired plants built in the U.S.

Other States recognize the merits of the Illinois FutureGen proposals. Indiana, Kentucky, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin have each declared support for the Illinois sites, based on their superior geology and infrastructure compared to competing sites.

A decision on where to site the FutureGen project is around the corner, and it can't come too soon. Global warming is already marring the Earth. Global average surface temperatures are rising at an alarming rate. Cold days are fewer, and heat waves are more common. Mountain glaciers and ice caps are melting. The global average sea level is rising. Coastal regions are threatened. It is no exaggeration to say that global climate change is the most threatening environmental disaster we face.

Through it all, the world's top scientists have clearly advised that man-made greenhouse gases that trap the Sun's heat are a significant factor in this shift in the global climate. Of those greenhouse gases, carbon dioxide is by far the most important. Because of our reliance on fossil fuels for heating, power, and transportation, carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere today are far greater than any seen in 650,000 years. And those levels are only growing.

In fact, the growth rate of carbon dioxide concentrations over the past 10 years is greater than at any point since we have been taking measurements. The problem will only grow worse as China, India, and others work to catch up economically to more developed countries. Much of that economic growth will be fueled by coal-fired powerplants.